

ItTakesAllKinds

**A zine embracing the thoughts
of a multicultural world**

**Issue 1
January 2006**

Welcome to the first issue of It Takes All Kinds. ITAK comes from a phrase I heard growing up to explain strange behavior in the world. When I was coming up with the idea for this zine, I thought about how zine contributors come from all walks of life with one thing in common: self-expression.

With this being the inaugural issue, I've assembled some amazing writers and artists. The only real guideline I have/had is/was that content be for a general audience. There are a couple of borderline pieces, so if you're offended, you can find my contact info in the back. As with any form of self-expression, you like it or you don't, so I guess what I'm saying here is that it truly does take all kinds to live in this world, and this is my little piece of it. Despite the fact that I have little of my own written content, this zine is still a part of me. So, consider this your disclaimer.

This issue is printed in conjunction with VAS Littlecrow and Rice Print Shop in Rice, MN. Unless, of course, you get one of the first run issues, which are printed right in my tiny apartment by me. You can find out more about VAS Littlecrow by going to www.vaslittlecrow.com and Rice Print Shop at www.riceprintshop.com.

In this issue, there is poetry by John O'Brien, James Dilworth, Bri Zine and Rick Silva, comics by VAS Littlecrow, One Neck Hates You, Ben Smith and Gynn Stella of Dandelion Studios, short stories by Brianne Fidgety, Adrian S. Potter, Michael D. Vizard, Vanesa Littlecrow Wojtanowicz and Loki W. Kaspari. Finally, we have columnist Dangerous Lee giving out her well-worded advice.

I hope you enjoy what you read here. Send any and all comments to misty@bravegirlstudio.net and visit on the 'net at www.bravegirlstudio.net/itak.html.

~+~

Gifted

By Rick Silva

Words blur, casting the redline
spellchecker
Into conspiratorial doubt
Look longer onto the page, the screen,
the glass
Familiarity flees, conjuring paranoid
unsurety
Even the letters of your own name
Morph to arcane and unknowable runes
With sufficient examination
The eyes mirror the soul

Dare you stare long enough?
Mirrors make corridors to places
unknowable
Passages glass-hard and cold
That dwindle into vertigo paradox

Can you reverse the plummet?
Pull back from a landscape that oozes
alien
Showing you strangers' glances
Suspicious, desirous, concealing
Full of everything you know you know
But never think or speak or feel

Behind the shield of the unexamined life
You curl in comforting shadow
Processing the moment's flash visions
Of the familiar unknown
With which you have been gifted

~+~

Random Thoughts

I feel listless and blah. I wish I had a couch.

~+~

Daughter

By John O'Brien

you round the
corner your eyes are
twinkling and you never could
hide the dimples behind your
hand and i start to get out of
my chair to put you back to
bed and i don't hear your feet
scamper and your giggling
is too far away.

~+~

Moth

By John O'Brien

I want to forget about the burning.

I want to

forget

about the
burning.

I

want

to
forget

about the burning.

I want
to
forget

about the

burning.

I forget

about

burning
the want.

I

want

the

burning.

I want the

burning.

I want
the burning.

I want to burn.

~+~

Obolus

By John O'Brien

You're still all
about your anchors

sand glazed stealing your
feet
walking
toward echoes in the
black
toward

someone's waiting

someone's waiting

your anchors are heavy
defined
at rest

Now you know why you
can't swallow.

~+~

Miles To Go

By Adrian S. Potter

I glance through a
fingerprinted window at
monotonous fields of agriculture.
A sign announces that the bus is
approaching Story City.

*"I bet there are a lot of
stories that start in Story City,
Iowa."*

I made that wisecrack
once during a road trip with
friends. We were cruising
southbound on I-35, shaking off
hangovers from the previous
night's bar festivities. I delivered
the sarcastic statement with proper
diction like a news anchor, adding a
smug pause to emphasize the
irony: a place seemingly without
character is named Story City.

Everyone in the car
chuckled. We actually knew little

about Story City, except that it had a mediocre outlet center visible from the interstate. Most minor Midwestern towns have these second-rate shopping areas. Business gurus must believe that urban folks mindlessly flock to cornfields for clearance deals. They all either have malls or massive civic centers, part of an elaborate scheme to rehabilitate subsidized farm economies. It's sad to watch these overgrown cattle towns pitch pennies at large-scale issues.

But that isn't the focus of this story, if this can even be called a story. It simply provides an adequate starting point. I'm once again going south on I-35, but this time there are no drunk college buddies accompanying me. Today I am a lonely bus traveler, a jaded malcontent trapped within a wide-framed metal monster. The bus has lurched along the highway for just three hours, but I am already impatient. This will be our seventh stop, and I can't decipher why we keep dawdling in places where the population is less than my high school graduating class.

A cheap CD player rests on my lap. It was a present from my ex-girlfriend given to me back when I was deluding myself that we were still close, during the days before our relationship developed into an atrocious ball of doo-doo. Although this gift works, the latch is stuck. Therefore, I can't change the compact disk without using a knife or flat screwdriver to pry the player open. Miles Davis is lodged inside and *Bitches Brew* has been playing for the better part of three hundred miles. But this is acceptable, since Miles demands my attention. He must be listened to repeatedly in order to truly appreciate his genius. Music siphons through headphones. It's dense, funky, and heavily percussive. I detect the stifled sounds of addiction within his long, sometimes drawn out solos. I want to be Miles, able to push away personal pain with a trumpet and uncanny talent.

Some people enjoy bus rides. Some people like to be chauffeured. Not me. It suffocates my spirit. I can navigate down roads faster in my junky sedan. So it pains me to be an insignificant passenger plodding along at a sundial's pace. Even the jazz cannot pacify this irritation. These highways were built for velocity, but this rolling barge remains apathetic. As we enter Story City, the heavy vehicle decelerates into the slowest moving object for miles.

Pulling into an undersized gas station, I notice a man who appears slower than the bus (at least mentally) perched behind a cash register. He's a suntanned, husky guy with glaring Unabomber tendencies. His eyes are red with insomnia. His baseball cap can't contain his greasy mullet. He plays with the ratty tufts of his hair, constantly, using a single finger stained by yellow-orange Cheetos residue. The clerk wipes sweat from his forehead with a sleeve and proudly stares at the soaked fabric. Then he sees the bus and tucks his open bag of snacks under the counter, trying to improve the aesthetics for potential customers.

I shift within my seat, transferring body weight from one numb buttock to the other, deciding whether to get off or wait for the next stop. I ask the previously comatose drifter across the aisle to save my spot, as if someone would want to sit near his transient stench. This unsavory man has faint creases on his face. In five years, his forehead will be tattooed with a road map of wrinkles, an inevitable side effect of survival. Suddenly, I realize that many marginal people are riding this bus. Then I wonder if I should also be considered marginal.

Strolling into the gas station, I contemplate buying a soda to mix with my vodka. But nature demands that I first scurry into the men's restroom. I get in there before any other lumbering oaf can claim a coveted urinal. The entire room smells like piss; once I finish peeing, I rapidly wash my hands with the white institutional liquid soap and escape the odor of past travelers' excrement.

The clerk should be business minded, yet he stares at the store's selection of cigarettes, longing for the tingle of tobacco. He probes his molars with a toothpick, searching for an elusive chunk of Cheeto that he can taste but not yet swallow. I wander through the store, seeking a snack with limited nutritional value. Nothing looks appetizing; it's all either prepackaged with obnoxious advertising or extremely plain. Even the miniature pizzas (positioned below a flashing neon sign that screams "FRESHLY BAKED") look dry and bland. They were flavorful once, before they were abandoned beneath nuclear-strength lamps. But like the cornfields outside, the pizzas are slowly dying underneath excessive heat. I feel like dying with them, but only for a second. Then I snag a cola, find a magazine that looks slightly interesting, and head towards the register.

The worker behind the counter is now coughing deeply without covering his mouth. I hear seeds of emphysema in each phlegm-filled hack. His fingertips are still coated with the synthetic coloring used to make his favorite snack look appealing. I imagine his car, parked beside the dumpster behind the building, is a giant overfilled ashtray dusted with broken potato chips. I hand him the exact amount for my purchase to avoid having his greasy germs infecting my perfect currency. After paying the clerk, I grab my drink and reading material and retreat to the bus.

My seat is still vacant, but the spot adjacent to it is now filled by a curvy young woman. Her nose is cute and button-shaped, with just enough cartilage to be pinchable. She instinctually licks her lips at my linebacker frame, and I smile a hello back. I scoot towards my window seat, my leg grazing hers in the process. Once seated, I pretend to read my magazine. I taste my soda, but then decide against adding any liquor, since an opportunity to flirt is next to me. A few minutes pass and the bus finally chugs onto the highway.

I feel my stomach rise like it does at the beginning of a rollercoaster ride, so I try my best to relax. I put my headphones back on and press play. Soon my head flings forward as I involuntarily drool towards sleep. I doze while firmly holding the remainder of my soda. I imagine having courage and seducing the short skirt seated beside me. *Bitches Brew* bounces in the background, providing a tripped-out soundtrack to my dream-induced bliss. When I wake up, the bus is in Kansas. The cute female has already gotten off at some unknown location, one probably as anonymous as Story City. I reach for my vodka and top off the cola bottle. I look around, examining all the nondescript passengers who are still traveling on this lethargic vehicle. There are people all traveling to different locations; some of them are normal, most of them are real, and I'm simply trying to get better at being both. My thoughts curse the methodical nature of bus travel, but then I unwind under the supervision of a jazz-funk groove. I remain unsure of my destination, but at least I still have Miles to go.

~+~

Random Thoughts

I have to say that one of the worst things in the world is being woken up by your phone at 6:45 in the morning, and getting a message from someone you thought was your friend telling you that you're too depressing and they can't be your friend anymore.

~+~

Last Call

By John O'Brien

the thought at first was unformed
without voice,
then realized and
stretched to breaking.

my hand wrote and
wrote but
only the words changed and
then it dawned on me why even
stone
fails after time.

Random Thoughts

Every sip of Coke I've had today is begging me to add bourbon to it. Is that a bad thing??

~+~

Saturation

[Art?]

By James Dilworth

for BME

the world does not need
another poet spinning rhymes
their family starving
stealing food at the dollar store

don't need a sax man
wailing the blues better than bird
snorting and shooting up his cash
died in his bed from cigarette ash

screw painters making scenes
coat after coat of varnished dreams

~+~

Shopping List

By Brianne Fidgety

eyeliner
green tea
sanity
canned peaches
garlic
string beans
broccoli
a renewed sense of living
satori
bananas
nail polish
Brillo
acceptance of self
salsa (hot)
patience
cranberry juice
tarragon vinegar
oregano
chives
something other than apathy.

~+~

photographers taking light beams
then air brushing the seams

director makes his vision
without a hero or a story
what's the point or the glory
when it's stolen from Pidgeon

clever clever writer lies in novels
revealing his secret secret life
trouble is everyone starts to doze
trying to read the purple, purple
prose

art and creation
does it stay in place
or, when overloaded in saturation
wither in modern life's haze.

Random Thoughts

... so I daydreamed today about how I wish it was physically possible to completely exchange all 12 pints of my blood for an equal

amount of Listerine. I could definitely use that minty fresh feeling physically, mentally, and emotionally.

~+~

Terror at Oakwood!

by Michael D. Vizard

Oh, the incomparable thrill of grave robbing! The breaking of a taboo so powerful is a remarkable experience that I recommend without reservation.

Once the casket is unearthed and the lid removed, choose a souvenir from the decedent's possessions—typically, a rosary or ring, although sometimes something more exotic: alcohol, sparklers or, once, I discovered a treasure map in the casket of an eccentric wealthy man! Don't be excited: Metaphorical gold, only, it turns out, "found in the hearts and minds of every freedom-loving citizen, blah, blah, blah." Eccentric, indeed! Regardless, take something from the corpse, and re-bury the whole thing. It can all be done quickly, especially if performed by a veteran under fair conditions.

I will never again, however, rob from Oakwood Cemetery, as a result of an unusual experience I had ten feet deep in the grave of Mr. Garrett Ambrose, an elderly haberdasher recently deceased. He was buried, I was pleased to discover at his funeral, in an exquisite bowler cap.

It is commonly and mistakenly believed that people are buried six feet underground, but burial depth varies, depending on many factors, such as the topography of the land, the skill of the bulldozer operator, and so forth. Garrett Ambrose ended up ten feet down. Quite a dig! I pried off the lid, and stood aghast. Although Mr. Ambrose had passed away only one week before, he had reached an advanced stage of putrefaction. His body was twisted into hideous contortions, bloated violently with gas and turned blackish. The cap was salvageable, however, and I placed it giddily on my head.

Some say the Lord preserves from bodily corruption the corpses of those saints who led lives of extraordinary piety. It is equally reasonable to believe the corpses of evil men can decay at an extraordinary rate, and that Mr. Ambrose was such a man. "What an asshole he must have been! What a life!" I chuckled. "Here's to you, you rascal!" And I tipped my new bowler.

My laughter subsided, and I sat and considered the implications of this discovery. As I did so, Mr. Ambrose rose. Quickly, I scurried up the side of the hole. From everywhere, bodies were rising from their graves, coming towards me. I fled, but the horde overwhelmed me, knocked me to the ground and engulfed me. I struggled under the mass, but their stinking, ever-growing weight held me secure. Suddenly, it lifted and the dead returned to their graves. I was completely naked. Mr. Ambrose tipped his hat, and descended into his grave.

I ran as far as I could. Those undead bastards had rolled me and taken my every cent. Somehow, I made it home and drank heavily. I have never returned to Oakwood, nor will I ever do so.

~+~

Random Thoughts

It is really annoying when one can't find their hole punch.

~+~

An Incident with F. Engle

By Brianne Fidgety

The weather was wholly unremarkable for early spring. Set into perpetual gloom sometime during late February, the gray sky almost seemed as fed up with itself as everybody else was. Perhaps its own self-discontent was the reason why it would vacillate so freely between its daily precipitation choices. Much to the flowers' delight, today it was raining.

The afternoon found the Northbridge Outpatient Medical Imaging Center teeming with the usual tedium. Multilined telephones insistently beeped and secretaries quelled them with soothing, lobotomized tones; Xeroxes whirled while rows of fluorescent lights hummed along in mechanical chorus. The monotony was periodically broken by pleasant voices summoning a fortunate being from Waiting Room Limbo or by a new soul arriving in Patient Purgatory. Office hours at Northbridge were, for the most part, predictably predictable.

Visitors to the diagnostic imaging center, with the exception of those who had sustained a major stroke or suffered from serious illness, were referred to as "Walkie-Talkies" -- people who were mobile and perfectly capable of communicating. Elderlies held the highest numbers, whether for spine x-rays or thyroid function evaluated by Nuclear Medicine scans, although flu victims often showed up for chest radiographs and expectant mothers sometimes stopped by for Baby's First Picture. With all this in mind, it should come as no surprise that the appearance of the 2:45 patient nearly caused a riot.

A rather pretentious-sounding automated chime alerted the waiting room to its presence. As if connected by a single motor-neuron-automatic-reflex, their heads swiftly turned to the direction of the new arrival. It was utter repulsion at first sight.

Its form, face, and ultimately gender were obscured by a long, gray, hooded cloak which nearly met the floor. The only aspect discernible through the heavy woolen fabric was a pronounced hunchback. It paused momentarily by the door, collecting its bearings and ignoring the stares. Once adequately steadied, the Quasimodo look-alike awkwardly made its way to the reception desk.

It didn't move with a limp confined to one leg, but rather, seemed to favour one entire side of its body over the other. Its locomotion can best be described as something reminiscent of Igor, the demented sidekick who had served Dr. Frankenstein in Hollywood productions from days long expired. It rocked and grunted across the carpet. The choice of attire it had opted to wrap itself in didn't dispel the expectation of the thing exclaiming "Yes, Master!" at any moment.

Not until it spoke was its masculinity confirmed. "Hello, I'm F. Engel. I believe my referring physician called ahead and settled any insurance issues, yes? As you can clearly see, I'm in no condition for paperwork." Golden and baritone, his opium-coated voice fluttered lazily through the office. As simple as they were, his words contained a glimpse of an infinity's worth of fiery sunsets, a million flickering fireflies suspended gracefully in the balmy nighttime summer

air, the heady rush of first love, a milk bath with Cleopatra, and all the shades of optimism.

After a long pause, the receptionist meekly replied, "Yes, sir. We've been expecting you. Please have a seat, and we'll get you in as soon as possible." She wasn't sure if she had actually spoken; her eardrums were still quivering.

Much to the room's disappointment, Mr. Engel wordlessly hobbled to a seat, which he climbed into and sat upon with visible discomfort. His next action was a normal one: he picked up an outdated issue of Newsweek. The flipping of the pages reverberated through the waiting room, as not a single soul had the valor to speak. Perhaps a little too often, he chuckled to himself over some private joke he and the magazine seemed to share. No one dared to cast a glance in his general direction.

After an insurmountable amount of uncomfortable squeamishness, Mr. Engle was invoked by a girl who, like him, clashed terribly with her surroundings. Although dressed in the standard, unoutrageous attire reserved for those in the medical profession, she still screamed for attention without producing a sound.

The body she inhabited was on the short end of tall with hypertrophic aspects of her anatomy that curved smoothly along feminine pathways. Her short, dark curls were perpetually tousled. If she didn't lack inertia and was able to stand still for any stretch of time, it seemed perfectly feasible that her strong, proud features and pallid, marbleish skin could earn her a resemblance to an alabaster effigy of Athena or Minerva, or maybe even Isis.

Her eyes were her most unforgettable characteristic. In a non-excitably setting, they were still overwhelmingly fascinating. Cartoonishly large and ceaselessly smoldering, her irises contained golden supernovas within pools of molten mahogany, all of which was contained by a perfect nimbus circle. Once a sufficient level of emotional charge had been reached, they would dance with feral hues of angered black, elated yellow, contemplative amber, and something that resembled the forest floor after a summer tempest reflected a morose internal climate.

"Hello, my name's Dagmar, and I'll be taking your x-rays today." She smiled like a Roman Candle.

He couldn't remember the last time the sweet smile of a young woman had increased the velocity of his steady heart. Despite his mind-numbing pain and boundless apathy, he grinned stupidly back at her, very much to his own surprise.

An average girl, especially one as young as Dagmar, would have capitalized on her unusual appearance. Instead of posing for glossy pages, Dagmar preferred to be behind a camera with a high photon flash. For her, the prospects of a black and white world full of chalky bones and barium-filled intestines captivated her sharp mind far more than the cult of vapid, plastic beauty ever could.

"It looks like you're not doing to good. Would you like some help?" she inquired, offering him her arm. There was nothing patronizing or condescending about the action; it was obvious that Dagmar was demonstrating empathy and compassion for her fellow man.

After a brief hesitation, he silently accepted the offer. Mr. Engle didn't need assistance. He wanted to tell her that his balance was just altered on account of his injuries. Ultimately, he decided not to mention it. He enjoyed the

feel of her soft, well-maintained skin far too much. Instead, he asked if she was originally from the area, even though he already knew the answer.

"No, actually. I work for an agency that sends x-ray techs all over the country. I'm only in a place for two or three months."

"It must be hard for you to make friends, then," he replied.

"Yeah, I guess it is. Maybe it would bother me more if I didn't like my solitude so much, though."

Mr. Engle could nearly inhale the overpowering gray fumes of loneliness that rolled from her. He realized that she was a stubborn type of person who tried so hard to appear tough and devoid of emotion. He contemplated informing Dagmar that she wasn't fooling him; he could close his eyes and clearly see a distraught, dark-haired girl crying softly to herself on the floors of so many different apartments.

"Why did you take this job?" he asked instead.

"Well, I had just graduated from school and wanted some sort of adventure."

"Did you find one?"

"No, but I will someday. I know it."

The last ten feet of their journey was spent in silence. Dagmar knew that x-raying Mr. Engle's left shoulder would be a complete pain in the ass. The severe curvature of his back was going to make him lying perfectly supine on the examining table a virtual impossibility, which would result in a severely magnified shoulder. The image produced would be distorted and largely useless in a diagnostic capacity. She was formulating a plan involving various angles as she led him into the x-ray room and shut the heavy, lead-lined door.

"Mr. Engle, I'll need you to take off your jacket or whatever that thing is. It looks pretty heavy, and sometimes things like that show up on the picture." Dagmar flashed him another dizzying smile before turning on her heel and walking across the room to retrieve the film cassettes necessary for the exam.

"So, what did you do to injure yourself?" she asked as she rooted around for three ten-by-twelve inch image receptors.

"I don't remember, actually. Two nights ago, a few friends and myself got together, and admittedly, consumed a little too much alcohol. I've been told that I took a tumble from a roof. I'm pretty sure it's broken, but my doctor wants to know exactly where so he can fix it."

Dagmar immediately abandoned her task and spun around to cast her patient a quizzical stare. It wasn't very often that one heard about some decrepit geezer in such an unbelievable predicament, let alone living through it.

She could have never been properly prepared for the sight that awaited her. Every book of mythology Dagmar had ever voraciously digested, every elusive pre-dawn longing, every stern warning of shadowy temptation fell short of the bliss-tinged fear that stood before her in the x-ray room.

He was tall, nearly an entire foot more than herself. His dark, auburnish hair hung loosely below his perfectly proportional ears and framed his curling red lips. There was nothing earthly about his blazing emerald eyes, which contrasted sharply with his pigmentless skin. Most notable, however, was the fact that his hunchback had transmogrified into a massive set of black feathery wings. One hung limply behind his left arm.

Dagmar, quite unimpressively, dropped her pen. Her nerves shot into murky indecisiveness. They couldn't figure out the best course of action for their host: propel her vocal cords into ear-shattering motion, send her bounding

down the hall, propel her forward with teeth bared. After careful analysis of the situation, her nervous system decided that she was, indeed, hallucinating.

After several excruciating minutes, she finally spoke. "Mr. Engle?"

"Yes?" he softly acknowledged her shaken speech.

"You...you're not really here, are you?"

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I am."

"No, I mean...uh...are you an angel?"

"A fallen one, yes."

"I don't -- er, uhmmmm -- I can't -- no -- I don't believe you. You can't be. You're not really here, or you don't actually look like that."

He laughed.

"I'm being made fun of by a figment of my overworked imagination.

Dear God. Errrgghh, sorry. It was just an expression."

"It's all right. You can say whatever you want around me. Or nothing at all, if it makes you more comfortable."

"But..."

"But what?"

"But you're not real! I'm having a nervous breakdown, that's what's going on! Jesus Christ, how the hell am I supposed to stop it? Did they teach us this in x-ray school? Oh no, I don't think they did!" Her fevered voice grew louder and more anxious with each statement. She took fast, shallow breaths and was having conspicuous difficulty maintaining her balance.

The creature who was obviously not named Mr. Engle was deeply concerned. The girl's calm nature was rapidly decaying into hysterics. It wouldn't be much longer until she reached a volume that was audible through the lead-lined walls. He didn't need more than one human aware of his presence.

"Dagmar," he said simultaneously soothing and forceful.

"...and I'm going to wind up institutionalized -- "

"Dagmar," he repeated.

Dagmar heard her name and instantaneously ceased her delirious ranting. Her logic circuit kicked back on enough for her to realize that he was employing the same strategy that she had used on so many unruly patients. His tone was well mediated and soft; she had no choice but to settle himself in order to hear what he had to tell her.

"Dagmar."

"Yeah?" she croaked.

"You're not hallucinating. I am, in fact, truly here. And I, indeed, not human. I know you don't believe me, but I can prove it to you if you'd like."

"Really?"

The fallen angel strode gracefully to Dagmar. She no longer resembled a beautiful woman. Here eyes were wide and rapidly cycling through all the colours it knew, unsure which one to decide upon. The wall she leaned against was her only means of support. Again, he was moved by the sight of her.

"Close your eyes," he commanded as he took her head between his long, willowy hands. She was at once transported to a place beyond the comprehension of herself, Einsteinian reasoning, the universe itself.

He watched her intently as her lips twisted with delight. Why does she have such a profound effect on me?, he wondered. Although uniquely gorgeous, he had met and tempted millions of mortals much more attractive than her. Maybe it was the precarious balance of strength and vulnerability that made her so brazenly Dagmar.

He had been good once, a trait which he could never fully suppress. It resurged as he stared down at her, so peaceful and blithe. He wanted so desperately to take all the bad things away from her, to move them into an infectious state of Wonderful. But it was dangerous to get that intimate with mortals. His kind had tried it before, and the results were disastrous.

He abruptly withdrew his hands from her. "Dagmar," he said without emotion.

Dagmar's eyelids lethargically fluttered a few times before deciding to remain half-open. "Love," she sighed dreamily.

"Dagmar!" he nudged her shoulder.

Dagmar blinked twice, and the astonished cloud was expelled from her eyes. "Yes, what?"

Despite his best efforts, he smiled at her. And much to his delectation, she beamed back.

Her brow eventually furrowed. "Why are you here? Are you going to steal my soul?"

"No, dear. I need for you to take my x-rays. My wing is broken. Remember?"

"Is that really all?"

"Yes, I promise. You will not be damned forever, if that's what you're worried about."

"Can I ask you something else?"

"Sure, Dagmar."

"Why didn't you just go to hell and get Satan to heal it for you or whatever?"

The dark angel tried so hard to refrain from giggling. "Oh,, boy. Where do I begin to correct what you just said?"

Dagmar shrugged and looked slightly insulted.

"Well, first off, there's technically no such thing as "Hell". My brethren were simply cast out of heaven, and we dwell here. The closest thing to "Hell" is where we convene. Hell is, in fact, a beautiful place, especially in the autumn. Still, it's dreadfully boring and the weather is wildly schizophrenic. I've been told, though, that that's simply the nature of Western Pennsylvania."

Dagmar nodded.

"And Old Lucy hasn't gone by that name in years!" he chuckled. "She and I don't get along like we used to. At any rate, she spends her winters in Bermuda and, as you can see, I'd have some problems getting there, even if I did take a plane.

"Thirdly, angels can't heal. When we fell, it was sort of like getting fired. The majority of our useful powers were taken from us. Still, though, we are immortal, and, as they say, time heals all wounds. But an injury of this caliber needs taken care of right away."

"Hey. Can I ask you something else?"

"Yes, go ahead."

"Who in their right mind would write you the prescription needed to get an x-ray?"

Laughter erupted from him. It was anything but intentional, but he could not remain stoic around her. "I have connections, you know," he finally answered as he wiped the tears from his gleaming eyes.

"Well, don't you think you would've been better off to go to a veterinarian?"

He glared at her.

"Sorry. I just figured...you know...with the wings and all..." she trailed off.

"Yes, well. Are you all right to take my pictures?"

"Yeah, I think so. I've never done anything like this, though, so I can't promise that they'll come out very good."

She took his hand and guided him against the wall-mounted x-ray device.

"Hold still. And hold your breath."

* * *

Three pictures later, she disappeared into the darkroom to feed her developed films to the automatic processor. Upon her return, she spied the angel with his back to her.

Before she realized the course of her actions, she was running to him, throwing her arms around his wings. "Please. Take me with you."

He spun around. Instantly, he was moved to pity. Her large, greenish eyes were overflowing with longing. He knew that she would spend the rest of her life alone. She would never fall in love with one of her own kind, never produce children as exquisite as herself, never know the feeling of somebody holding her hand as she drifted into death. She had already grown tenaciously attached to him, and would spend the rest of her days pining.

"Dagmar..." he started.

"Please."

The post-life fate of her soul hardly seemed fair. If it ended up with Lucy, proud and selfish Lucy, it would be cast aside and forgotten, taken for granted like so many shining others. Conversely, if it was stolen by an even prouder God, it would be put to work praising Him for all eternity. He knew that Dagmar deserved so much better.

The angel smiled sadly before placing his lips over hers. The air grew perfumed around them. Nameless colours danced. Her molecules bent and broke. The energy that animated her, that made her so unmistakable, surged forward and into him. He sputtered and stumbled, nearly collapsing.

He allowed her body fall to the floor. Somebody would find it in due time. His eyes lingered upon it for a few more seconds before walking to the processor to pick up his films, then out the door, always with her cemented in his heart.

~+~

Narragansett Bay

By Rick Silva

You can stand on her grave and see the bay

It's good that she's here

We're all in agreement

On a clear day like today there's a
shining patch of blue
Over the green hill
Past the rows of flowers, flags,
headstones

There's a sea breeze, and a smell of
fresh cut grass
As we lay the miniature roses

From the Stop & Shop up the road

And even now, years past, no one can
quite comprehend
So we admire the view of the bay
All in agreement

~+~

Random Thoughts

I am convinced that close football
games contribute to grey hair.

~+~

November 17th

By John O'Brien

I am five years old playing outside
with army men.
Part of you must be saying
you just don't know.

I never tell you I pretend
one of the army men is you
and you always win.

I look at the side of your head.

I am a stupid little boy
hating my project of interviewing you
until you talk.
You tell me everything
but I still don't know.

I touch the side of your head.

I write awkward poems
have dreams about helicopters
talk to other vets and watch movies
and I still don't know.

Today I listen to someone else who
doesn't know
say words like "unfortunate" and "better
future"
and something angry bites deep in my
belly.

He says it's not an apology
as he apologizes in all the ways
that won't get him in trouble.

I think of the side of your head
as it was before I ever saw it
bursting
skull and blood and brain and hair and
fluids Hollywood would spare us from
painting the ground around you.

On the radio he's talking.

Inside me you're dying again.

I can hear the helicopter coming for
you.

On the radio someone gets to voice an
opinion.

I imagine thirty-five years later
you are still waiting for the helicopter.

I know how the story goes from here:
You go to a hospital boat

and then back to America
where they spend a year and a half
rebuilding you.
You learn how to function
and swear you can still hear where there
is no ear.

They tell you that you are wrong
until they find your eardrum during one
of the surgeries.

They give you a new skull and ear and
say thank you.

You meet Mom and have us kids
always having to explain yourself at
show and tells
and teacher's conferences.

For a while I point out the scar to my
friends
and you don't complain
because we don't understand.

On the radio a reporter says something
about the
"historic visit" and "progress."

The angry red thing inside me swells.

I'm twenty seven on
November 17th.
I want to say I finally know.

~+~

Cycles

By Misty O'Brien

The moment you are born
you begin to die.
And that's so, if you
believe in the how and why.
Or is the death
like a chapter's end?
The next one starting
when we are born again.
Each independent, yet
building on the last
We're writing the future
while remembering the past.
We grow old and pass
to our personal fate
Dependent on belief
on a not-so-random date.
One chapter ends
a new one starts
Being written with
the sum of our parts.

Purge

By John O'Brien

(Though I hoped differently,
I knew you would not chase me.)

Coils are tight and trembling
(we both know a circle has no end.)

I dreamed I could be different ...

I dreamed I could be braver
unetched in
stone and stars
crossing ---

I am a blade
knowing only rust and cobwebs here
I am sharp
still
born to focus

bite the weak link ...

my place
is biting
into
soft
nothings
(dreaming
of green
blue

dreaming of
green
white)

Awake to red ...

I hoped differently
~+~

Random Thoughts

One of the funniest sights in the world is
[watching someone] going through
caffeine withdrawal.

~+~

The Missed Call

By Vanesa Littlecrow Wojtanowicz

Checked my messages... I
received news from the doctor. God and
the rainforest healed me. It's official.
The malignant cells are gone.

I received news from my
mother. One of the two people who
taught me how the rainforest could heal

me, will be buried underneath the soil
that gave birth to rainforest. It's
happening two days from now. I can't
even afford the plane tickets to Puerto
Rico.

One more dead green-eyed
Indian in the world. This one died in his
sleep, under the care of my uncle.
Fortunately, Grandpa doesn't have to
suffer the indignity of the elders that are
being displayed as archaeological
artifacts in Caguana. He was lucky to be
born in a time when the Puerto Rican
government doesn't want to
acknowledge that the Taino exist, even
though sixty percent of the people in
Puerto Rico have Taino DNA. Extinct
indeed.

At least they didn't force us
into reservations, like the American
government did to the Natives in the
Mainland. We are like the Hawaiians.
They ignore us and they pretend that
we went away, much in the same way I
try to ignore deity and pretend it doesn't
exist.

Life at the Rez is very depressing.
Freedom as an invisible person is only
mildly less depressing.

Grandma didn't even notice
his death. The Alzheimer's made
Grandpa invisible to her. He loved her
until his dying day, I'm sure. She could
have cared less. Now that he's gone,
she might be staying at the nursing
home run by nuns to prevent my uncle
from going insane. She's too violent and
too forgetful for him. Grandma loves
hanging around
with nuns -- even when she doesn't
remember anything else.

Yesterday, I thought I was
delusional. I went into a Catholic
bookstore. I felt out of place, yet I felt
comforted by the surroundings. I
caressed rosaries and thought of my
good Catholic witchdoctor grandparents.
I gratefully remembered how their
teachings saved me from complete
oblivion when I became a drunken
stereotype. Their stories about the
rainforest and Jesus, ultimately, saved
my life. Actually, Grandma was the one
who was all about Jesus. Grandpa was
more ambivalent.

My mind returned to the
bookstore. I felt out of place. I felt like
the Great Spirit was there, even though
I tried to convince myself it was
non-existent. Then again, God and I

have always had a love-hate relationship. Maybe it's because we've always been so close. Like a kid and her mom. At least that's how it was with my mom and I when I was growing up. Now that I am grown, we're at peace. I think this is where I am with that allegedly omnipresent bastard nowadays.

I thought it had been a dream this morning. Me talking to grandpa about life and death and God. It happened hours before I missed the call. I guess he wanted to talk to me before he went away.

His spirit greeted me by saying, "Girl, how are you doing?"

"Fine," I told him, while actually being full of insecurity. "Grandpa, you're not mad I'm an atheist lesbian in a sham marriage with no children, are you?"

Grandpa smiled, "You're fine the way you are, but God decides what you believe. You make your husband happy and that's what counts."

"Yeah, my friend's good to me and he gives me money so I don't have to work a real job. Besides, after the last disaster with 'Miss Thing', I'd rather focus on my art and take a vow of celibacy."

The old man's wrapped his arm around my knotted shoulder. I could've used a massage. His reassurances were the next best thing. "Kid, you generally stay out of trouble and your art is better than you hurting yourself. God is a good guy, but he's usually too busy to take care of everything. Ultimately, he wants you to be happy."

I replied sardonically, "Or dead. Are you ready to die?"

Grandpa shook his head, "It would've been you or me, and you don't need me anymore. That's why God healed you. You have so much life ahead of you. I'm just an old fart, and I'm in too much pain from the broken hip."

I bowed my head and stared at my feet. "I think I can handle myself. You can go home now. Everyone is taken care of and I am all grown up now. I'm ready to be an elder."

He said, "God wants me. Grandma is in good hands. You keep doing what you're doing. You'll do fine. There will be Chaos, but you are a daughter of the Red Hawk and the Boa.

Make sure grandma sees the Red Virgin before she dies."

I replied, "Yes Grandpa."

Don't ask me to explain what that was about. It's a dream so it isn't supposed to make sense. I may not believe in creationist bullshit, but there seems to be some sort of master plan here. This is my admission that I am no longer an atheist. I don't believe in the God I used to believe in. I believe in the God grandpa told me about: A good guy, way too distracted, but he means well.... if he means anything at all.

~+~

Football Musings

by Misty O'Brien

I never thought I'd like watching football. Growing up, I didn't understand the game that well, and it didn't matter to me. Sure, I cheered for high school football when my brother was on the team, but then there was a bit of personal stake, I guess.

After I met my husband, he started in earnest to make me a convert. And not to the Minnesota Vikings, even though we live in Central Minnesota. His team was - and is - the Pittsburgh Steelers. I wasn't a fan, but I'd humor him by watching the games with him and listen to him talk about the players. A couple years ago, he bought me my own Steelers cap, and was convinced in the 2004-05 season that my wearing the cap helped them win. During that time, I'd help him with fantasy football stuff as well. Again, not interested, but I wanted to support his interests. Well, something's happened over this past season: I've started to become a fan. An ESPN-reading, website-browsing fan. Who now understands not only the intricacies of the game, but helps score the fantasy games every week. I actually traded days with a co-worker to be able to watch the Pittsburgh-Cincy game on January 8th. I'm sure John's next goal is to get me to an actual game. We'll see.

Kill Poetry

By James Dilworth

kill poetry kill language kill art kill music kill
yourself save yourself be yourself dont try
to be creative be dead rot and stink and
give up and lie and cheat and steal and
seal your fate and resume your late dated
great fate can you be sated as your kill
yourself and art and creation how simple it
is to destroy creation and kill but to give up
and die is more difficult than living poetry
breathing poetry and discovering poetry
and its nuanced nothingness and being a
killer of poetry would be so wonderful and
more than being wonderful it would be a
stream of consciousness that would
suddenly awake before the death and the
night of the soul longing becoming longer
and languorously dead. Greyness and
gloom is what has suddenly become the
nadir of being, OK riot! be creative and
contemplative and in your failing world
view it's become new to be really really
really killed so try and kill words that are
printed in paper and on the mind and the
soul that sound deeply within the bell
towers of churches all over america and
canada whence came the sound of drums
and furious anger a fatal scored man who
lived and killed and died between the
sounds of a train and a bavarian brasserie
on valley road and nearer fourth street
than is an arcane archaic sport played in
innings and quarters and halves only until
we kill the system and the certain doom
and deadly killing feeling to form my ideal
of love and life killing it before it can
consume me and resume me kill ideals kill
reveals kill fun kill parties kill colonel kill bill
kill politics kill love kill life kill beauty kill all
of us and yourself mostly but kill kill
killkillkillkillkillkillkill

killkillkillkillkillkillkillkill kill

and thrill in your kill and your death and
the remains of nothing surrounding you

time to do something and be strong kill
poetry

kill poetry kill art kill self kill

~*~

Random Thoughts

I feel blah and restless.
I want mashed potatoes.

Beloved Margie

by Misty O'Brien

At the time of this writing, it has been
over 9 months since my 29th birthday. A
lot of people typically herald that day as
a milestone, because once you turn 30,
you must be considered old. I have had
some form of birthday anxiety since I
was a teenager. Some years were worse
than others, and usually stemming from
what I had or hadn't accomplished over
the previous year.

I was feeling pretty good about turning
29. I had requested the day off from
work well in advance. I didn't have any
plans made, but that is usually the nice
part about a day off: no plans.

In March, 2005, we celebrated Easter
with my husband John's family. My
mother-in-law's sisters, brother-in-law
and mom were all in attendance.
Several of us were feeling under the
weather, as spring often does when the
temperatures fluctuate. I remember that
John was feeling less than stellar and
was worried about getting anyone else
sick. So, a few days later when we were
at home waiting for John's doctor
appointment (he had coughed up blood
that morning and stayed home from
work, and I was on a scheduled day
off), he didn't take the news very well
that Grandma Marge was in the
hospital. And the prognosis wasn't good.
He thought he had made her sick. I
gently explained that even if he had
passed on his cold, three days was too
early for her to show symptoms. We
shifted into crisis mode. After trying to
move John's appointment from the
afternoon to asap, we resigned
ourselves to the fact that we couldn't
leave St. Cloud for St. Paul until at least
4 pm. The call came in at 11. Five hours
is agony when you don't know if you'll
be able to say good-bye to someone
dear.

It was Wednesday, May 31st.

I called my boss and explained that I
wasn't going to work the next day. The
thing is, I put family before anything
when there's a crisis. Not only was
John's last living grandparent dying, she
was extremely special to him, having
been roommates in the mid-90's. I told
my boss that he should do what he
needed to, but I knew my place and
that was with John.

[Something I should mention is that John's Grandma reminded me a lot of my late Grandma Vivian. I never was able to say good-bye with her aware I was there. She slipped into cardiac arrest and went too long without air. After three days of being in a coma and hearing a prognosis that she would never be the same woman, my mom's family decided to let her go. I missed her terribly, and was grateful to meet John's Grandma. She even made the same kind of towels my Grandma made.]

We packed some things and drove to John's work. He had already shown up that morning and the manager sent him home to wait for the doctor appointment. We walked in together and told the head manager the situation. John walked back out with the rest of the week off. We didn't want to sit around being worried, so we wandered through stores until our appointment at Express Care. Minutes after John's prescription was filled for cough medicine, we were in the car and on our way to Region's Hospital in St. Paul. We got lost trying to find it, but eventually made it there. Grandma was lucid and joking, and made it a point to talk to each one of us individually. When it was our turn, we sat next to her bed and held her hand. She told us we were going to have beautiful children, and she was happy that John and I were together.

For a long time, John and I have had our future children's names picked out. We told Grandma that should we have a daughter, we planned to name her after two of her great grandmas: Marge and Vivian.

We spent the night at John's parents in Forest Lake. We discovered that the headlights in my car were starting to fade. In the dark and the rain...that's no fun at all. We made it, and had mostly a sleepless night.

On Thursday, we drove back to the hospital and visited. There was a lot of emotion, and I felt like I didn't belong there, because she wasn't my grandma, even though she reminded me so much of my own. There were some reassurances and talking, and we left for home in the afternoon, feeling dejected because we live so far away from where we wanted to be. There were strict instructions, however, that on Friday, if

something went wrong, John's mom was to call, and John would call me at work. I told the supervisor at work (my boss was gone that day) that if my husband called, I had to drop what I was doing and go.

Grandma lived through the weekend. Money was tight for us at the time, (and usually is regardless), so we spent the weekend at home, calling periodically. Grandma had been moved from the hospital to John's parent's house. Of the three sisters, John's mom was the one who didn't work outside the home and could spend the most time with Grandma.

We called daily and made plans to go to Forest Lake that Thursday (April 7th) to spend time with the family. I had already talked to my boss about what I needed to do for the funeral was on a weekday. As it happens, John's grandma was too distantly related for me to take bereavement from work. So I had to use vacation.

On April 6th, we were doing a load of laundry when John became sad and despondent. I told him to call his mom, but he didn't want to bother her. I called his mom and said that her son needed her and gave the phone to John.

Grandma's blood pressure was something like 80 over 40. After John hung up, we talked and decided that I wanted to drive down to Forest Lake that night. John's mom called back and said if we were okay with sleeping on the floor, we were welcome to come down that night.

Crisis mode once again. We packed clothes, and some activities and waited for the load of laundry to finish. John called into work and received permission to take Thursday off. No one really wanted to say it out loud, but we knew that Grandma was about to leave us. We arrived in Forest Lake after 10pm, I think.

[John has one brother, Tim and one sister, Jenny. At that point, Jenny was 4 ½ months pregnant. John also has one cousin, Damon, who is married with a daughter.]

When we arrived, Damon was there, and Tim had already left. Jenny was living with John's parents. We went into the family room where Grandma was sleeping in her hospital bed. We held her hand and kissed her forehead. After a bit we went into the living room and

talked with John's mom's cousin, who was visiting from Kentucky.

I had brought my beads with and worked on reorganizing them. I mostly just did "busy work" to keep me distracted. Around 2 in the morning, I settled into a recliner and dozed. John slept on the loveseat.

At 3:30 in the morning, John woke me up to tell me that Grandma was gone. Everyone was crying and trying to handle all of the overwhelming emotions. I went into the family room to say a final good-bye, and then settled on the living room couch and tried to nap so I could drive the next day.

Later in the morning, we were present when the funeral home picked up Grandma. I held John and tried to be strong. I called my mom and let her know what was going.

John's mom and aunt went to make funeral arrangements and put together an obituary. Jenny had an ultrasound appointment that afternoon to find out the gender of her baby. I turned 29.

In the afternoon after Jenny and my mother-in-law returned with news that Jenny was going to have a son, I opened my gifts from John's family. The gift that struck me the most was a card from John's Grandma.

John and I went home later that afternoon with plans to meet at the funeral home Monday morning. We both went to work the next day (the 8th) and made arrangements to be gone on the 11th.

Wanting to do something, I took my beads and made crosses for everyone in John's family. Including his aunts, uncle, cousin and his cousin's family, I made 14. The first one went into Grandma's casket. We also included a few pictures, 65 cents (representing the card game called 65), and a printout of a journal post John made about her.

She was buried in the outfit she wore to our wedding. She couldn't climb stairs very well, but she made it down a full flight to attend the lunch after our wedding in February, 2004.

John was a pallbearer, along with Tim and Damon and three of Grandma's nephews. It was a hard day. Internment was at Fort Snelling, as John's Grandpa was in the service. [In fact, both sets of John's Grandparents are buried at Fort Snelling, as will be his parents after

they die because John's dad served in Vietnam.]

We drove home in the afternoon and tried to function again.

We do okay with Grandma gone, but on days of Twins games, John gets a little sadder. Her birthday in June was a somber day. Going through her estate was a lesson in family civility.

She was missed at Jenny's baby shower in July, but remembered because I made a blanket for my nephew using yarn I had received from the estate.

She was missed again when Ethan was born, but he was brought to the house before the closing. John and I toured the house one last time and I took a lot of pictures. John's aunt and uncle live one street over from Grandma's house, so we'll never forget how to get there. John likes to tell me stories of when he lived with Grandma. How he'd walk to the corner store and get snacks. How he'd watch Twins games with Grandma or play cards. How he'd come home from work to be greeted with a tasty meal.

One of the things, I think, that sealed the deal for John and I was the day I met his Grandma. Fourth of July, 2002. We had been dating for nearly a month and a half. I was invited to his aunt and uncle's for the family festivities. I had already met his parents. When lunch was served, I sat with his Grandma and talked with her and with his uncle's mother. John told me later that he thought that meant a lot to his Grandma, and he knew how special I was (and am).

I don't think you ever stop missing someone as special as a Grandma. I only wish I could have spent a little more time with her while she was alive.



FIGHTING WORDS

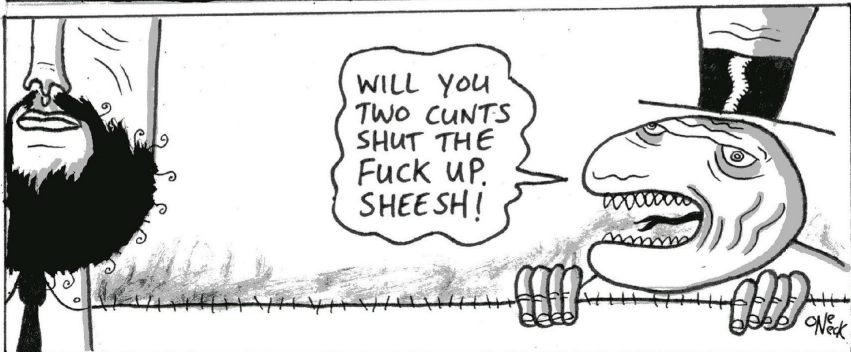
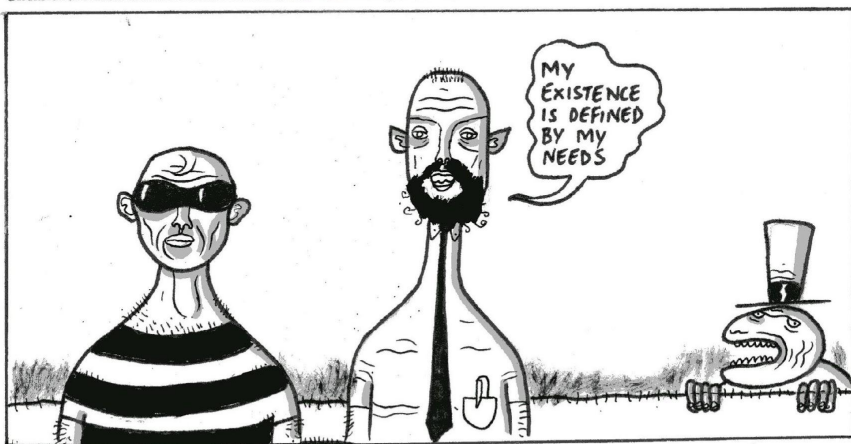
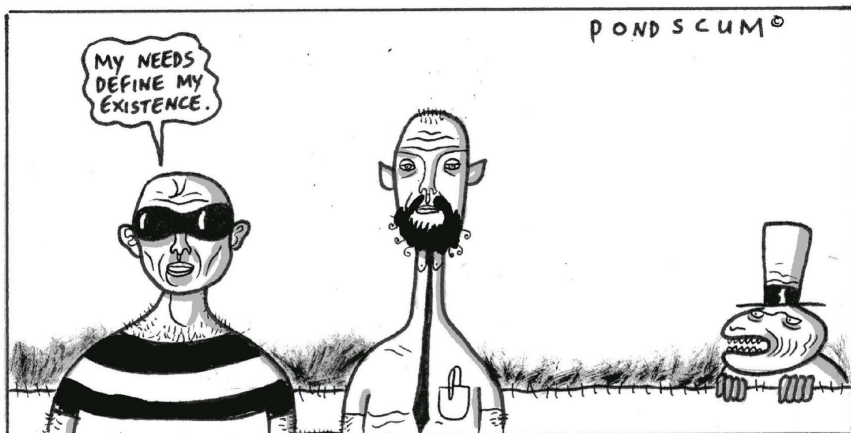
by Ben Smith



Random Thoughts

I just got berated by my activist neighbor for not knowing all of the steps and avenues I can take for my "disability" (depression, anxiety, paranoia, etc). On

one hand, I understand that people are trying to help, and I appreciate that. On the other hand, I'm tired of people telling me that what I'm doing to keep myself together is wrong. If you can live my life better than me, go ahead. I'm done.



Editor's note: ITAK is fortunate enough to have two columns by Dangerous Lee, so we're gonna print both of them. First up is December's column, followed by January's column.



Ask Dangerous Lee

By Dangerous Lee

Q: What are your thoughts on a man who asks you what you want and need

out of a relationship, and when you answer honestly he calls you a selfish, self-centered person?

Blove

Dallas, Texas

A: My guess is you asked for too much or you just met a man who can't give you what you want and need. If you answered him honestly then you might honestly be a selfish and self centered person, but because that was his response that makes him just as selfish and self centered. You were dealing with a boy. Find a man who can handle you!

Q: Would you prefer the same sex gynecologist or opposite? Why?

Red Ave

New York, New York

A: Same sex gyno for me please. Men don't have vaginas so why should they be able to tell me what's wrong with mine!

Q: How in the hell do you kick out millions of people living in temporary living shelters after losing everything due to the effects of Katrina and Rita?

Marlon

Detroit, Michigan

A: The key term is "temporary living shelters". That's all I can say because it's a sad and very wrong thing to do, but we must pay attention to the tiny details and how things are worded. Those FEMA bastards are tricky!

Q: One of my best friends is also my ex-boyfriend. We have both realized that there are still lingering but strong

feelings, but of course our current situations are not such that we can just run into each others arms with an orchestra playing in the background like the movies. My question is, do you have a "one that got away" and if so, if given a second chance with them, would you take it?

Rashida

Nassau, Bahamas

A: Yes, I do have "one that got away" and yes if I had another chance with him I would give it a shot. The question is would he give me another shot! Unfortunately, I think the answer is no. He recently came back into my life for a hot second and left just as fast. On second thought no I would not give it a shot. Damn him! That orchestra crap does only happen in movies!

Q: Why is it that when we give a man all the love and care in the world they treat us like we're not anything important, and when we treat them like dirt they want to be good to us?

Melissa

Kankakee, IL

A: Men are pigs. They like the dirt and they also like to be treated the way they treat others. My advice is treat your man like dirt and he'll be a good boy!

Things That Make You Say...WHAT!!!!?

The Country Music Awards and the Vibe Awards were on at the same night at the same time. Why was there no mention of the Vibe Awards the next day on television shows such as Entertainment Tonight and Inside Edition, but there was a big deal made out the Country Music Awards and the fact that it was taped in New York for the first time? Do we really give a damn? If anything the Vibe Awards deserved an honorable mention because no fights broke out!

Speaking of the Vibe Awards, why did Ludacris wear a Confederate Flag jumpsuit while singing the song "Georgia" in honor of Ray Charles? Have we as Black people forgotten or do not realize what the Confederate Flag represents? Like I told ya'll last month....read! I know Georgia is a Confederate state, but the Confederate flag is not the state symbol. His stylist needs a butt kicking.

Where did Madonna get all that behind that she's currently shaking in her new video for "Hung Up"? The last time we saw Madonna half naked she could have used some junk in her trunk. Did she get butt implants or is yoga the new way for White girls to back that thang up? Watch out JLo!

Wentworth Miller of Fox's Prison Break is not a White guy he just plays one on television! That's right the sexy as hell inmate known as Michael Scofield proudly admits that he's not a White guy. His father is African American and his mother is White. I commend him. In this day and age when someone bi or multiracial appears to be just the opposite they have no problem hiding their heritage or passing as something they're not. He also has a Princeton education. Not only is he sexy he's intelligent too. Why can't men like him exist in Flint?

How in the world did bland and skinny Jennifer Aniston make it as GQ's first ever Woman of the Year? Woman of the Year for what? Is she Woman of the Year for having been dumped by Brad Pitt and shoving it in all of our faces as if we all haven't had heartbreak? Furthermore, how in the hell did ignorant 50 Cent and dopey Vince Vaughn make it on two separate covers of the magazine for Man of the Year? GQ is not so GQ anymore. What the hell does GQ really mean anyway? Not much as far as I'm concerned!

That's all for now! Happy New Year! Stay Dangerous!!!

~+~

Q: I'm addicted to MySpace and some would say I'm a Myspace ho. I've found some cute boys on there to chat with, should I try and meet them? Have you had any MySpace romances in the past? The public has a right to know!
-Turning tricks on Myspace, Flint

A: First, let's get one thing straight, the public does not have a right to know a damn thing that I don't want them to know, but no I have not had a MySpace romance. I am not one who believes in online love especially on MySpace. I need to see and touch my man in the flesh! Anyway, be very careful of whom you meet up with from MySpace or anywhere else

online. There have been more than a few cases of serious crimes taking place in the last year involving people who have met on MySpace. Beware of the MySpace tricks!

Q: What does a hot bi sexual 23 year old do when he met an Uncommon Sense staff writer named Steve who is so hot? Should I tell him I think he is hot or no? Maybe he would be interested, maybe not?

-Confused In Flint Town

A: Hey! That's all on you buddy. All I can say is turn on your bidar and see if Steve makes a move!

Q: Why do all the good people who want to make a difference end up being murdered or silenced and all the fuckwits are left to rule the world?
Elam, Dubai

A: That's a deep question. Are you sure you have the right column? Unfortunately "fuckwits" often hold high power positions and rule and ruin the world. Many decent people in the world are silenced because "fuckwits" don't want their cover blown.

Q: How can women take back their power? What I mean is we give men the upper hand in choosing us now; we're courting them when WE should be courted. Are women desperate or are men just lazy?
Tisha Borum, Worldwide

A: Yes and yes! Women are desperate and men are lazy. The roles have definitely reversed, but we still have the power so there is no power to take back. The problem is that many of us are not using that power wisely. Men are taking on many female characteristics and women are being very mannish. This is because we as woman have to be a man and woman rolled into one in order to survive, raise our children, and protect ourselves. These men I speak of have been raised by single moms and many of them take on a female persona, so to speak. As you can see I could go on about this for quite some time, but hang in there sista you'll find a man to court you.

Q: I read your celibacy blog on MySpace and I understand where you're coming from, but how do you do it?
Denise, Flint

A: Just keep your damn legs closed! I kid. I kid. Have you seen the men around here? The question should be why didn't I do it sooner!

Exhaustion for Dummies

Every time you turn around another celebrity is out of commission because of exhaustion i.e. extreme fatigue. Spare me! I don't know about you, but I think exhaustion is code for being high on drugs or alcohol, suffering from the effects of bulimia or anorexia, or recovering from plastic surgery. The latest victim of exhaustion is Ashlee Simpson who recently admitted that she once had an eating disorder. How much do you wanna bet that she still has it? I think all she needed was a ham sammich on rye and her hospital stay would have been a short one.

Over the years exhaustion has been the blame for almost every major celebrity being sick and off the scene for a short period of time. Poor celebrities, it must be so hard living the life of luxury and right in the middle of the glitz, glamour, and getting everything your way done by other people that your body gives out from overexposure to the good life and you have to be admitted to the hospital, sometimes an IV must even be inserted to keep them alive. Note my sarcasm.

What the hell is going on? Don't get me wrong I know that the life of a celebrity can be difficult at times, but exhaustion?! Exhausted from what? How many of us here in the city of Flint are exhausted and broke down from working for General Motors for 30 years or more? I'm sure my mom is raising her hand. My mother is exhausted, dammit! Yet everyday with her poor body beaten and health in bad shape she makes the painful trek to work on a daily basis. I'm sure she would love to check into Hurley Hospital and call in to work exhausted and have an

IV replenish her system too. Well, I'm sure she could do without the IV, but you know where I'm coming from.

The part that really bothers me is celebrities continue to make millions while they're out exhausted, and lots of it. If my mom calls in exhausted she'll have to explain exactly what exhausted means and why it's a valid reason for her absence that day. If that goes over well she may get one day off, but she better have her butt back at work the next day making the vehicles that so many of us are breaking our necks to buy. Note my sarcasm again!

You see, us everyday folks have to work very hard everyday for our tiny paychecks. We don't like it, in fact we hate it but this is how we survive. You hear us complain, but do we ever call in exhausted? No! We have the decency to just call in sick!

Celebrities need to keep it real. If you want a day off please take it. You have my permission. I get sick of looking at your damn faces sometimes. Don't feel obligated to make an appearance for me if you don't want to. I'll catch ya next time. Not!

Woo, all this writing is exhausting! I need four weeks away. I'll catch you guys next month! *Thud*

Extra Extra

I've been published in a small anthology magazine called Harpy Cords: A Guidebook for Inspirational Bitchiness. Please visit www.cafepress.com/vaslittlecrow2 and pick up a copy today to read my exclusive bitchy article! Also, be sure to keep an eye on The Uncommon Sense website for a Flint Clip starring yours truly!!! 2006 is my year!!!

Send all questions and rant ideas to
askdangerouslee@hotmail.com

~+~

Random Thoughts

I used to love to go on walks the night
after a good snow ... the air would be crisp,
blowing errant flakes into my cheeks with
gentle sting ... the ground utterly perfect,
ruined only in the wake of my passing ...
going to a late night gas station for a Coke
and snack to eat on the way home ...

Editor's Note: John's beloved Grandma
Marge died on April 7, 2005. This poem
was written a few months later.

And Many More

by John O'Brien

cathedral
green with white
trim

dissolution

into angry shrines.
I think I smell bacon
and eggs

you
chopped the bacon
and mixed it in ...

There are pieces of vacations
retirements
hellos
goodbyes
(angry)

... we are playing cards
you can't beat my two pair
for the dozenth time
shaking your fist
and we're both laughing
(shrines).

... and the Twins game went
into extra innings
you're sleeping on the couch
I'm waking you
gently
to tuck you in.

... yeah.
to tuck you in.

but ...

St. Cloud doesn't seem to quite have the
knack for plowing its streets and sidewalks
like good ol' Forest Lake ... never did get
over how a town of forty- odd thousand
less people could do a markedly better job
of keeping up with snow removal over what
this place can ...



John and his Grandma, August 1973

~+~

Prop

By John O'Brien

- you?

- you're going to save me?

you're not the story.
you're not a character.
you are a fulcrum.
the candlestick that damned col.
mustard
for his jealousy.
in the library.

exhibit A.

open and
shut.

open and waiting for a push
to blame on the wind.

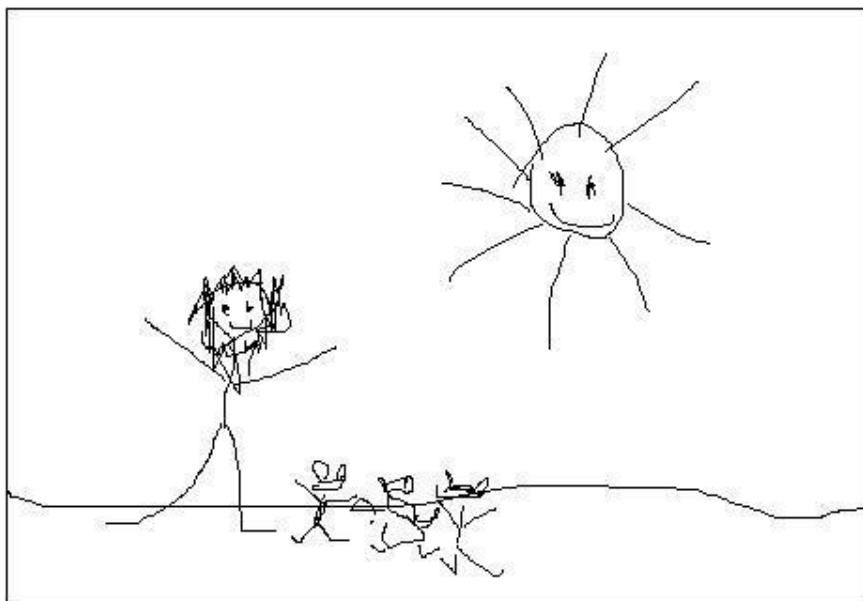
~+~

WHY JOOJET BECAME A BASS PLAYER.

A SEXUAL RODENTIA COMIC
BY VANESA LITTLECROW W.



Sexual Rodentia - Copyright 2005 Vanesa Littlecrow Wojtanowicz - VAS Littlecrow - www.vaslittlecrow.com



art by skyah



my hand
by Bri Zine

i heard my name, not called or shouted
but said more poetically and beautifully
than i ever could have imagined it
sounding
he must have waited here for over an
hour
as i stayed much longer than even i
expected
reading a book of our professor's poems
to break up my usual routine

and he took my hand

he led me back inside
up to one of the highest floors, the 11th
floor
of the tallest building in portage county
which is not so impressive for a city girl
who expects skyscrapers and wishes on
satellites
because, us city girls, we do not see
stars
and he takes my hand

he leads me amongst the books
that smell like my mother's basement
after the water pipes began to leak
and it rained in our house for five days
and he takes my hand

now, suddenly, adultery is not a sin
as though now, suddenly, i am a
christian
as though now, suddenly, i care about
sins

and he has my hand in his own

i think of the courtyard by merrill hall
where most people only notice
the giant sculpture of a human brain
but i noticed first the benches and walls
carved to look like books, and i prayed
one day someone would propose to me
there
and here we are-
he has my hand

~+~

In other news...

by John O'Brien

I got home from work yesterday to find a fire truck and three squad cars outside our building. Upon inquiry (i.e. the busybody neighbor across the lot ambushing me as I got out of my car), I found out the guy in the apartment next door had died.
Almost a week ago.

Outside some mild revulsion about eating and sleeping 20- odd feet from a decomposing corpse, it's incredibly sad that someone could die alone like that over Christmas and not have anyone check on them until someone notices the smell coming from their apartment. It's disturbing going out into the hall since last night. The cops put perfume and air fresheners out there. Very strong. Too sweet. Obviously masking something. Hiding something.
Hiding absence.

~+~

De Evolution, or Five Finger Discount.

By John O'Brien

As I began the training for the latest vocation in my ever lengthening of vocations, I was informed that I should try to use my thumbs as little as possible during the course of work
...

This made me wonder a little ...

Two of the things that mark primates in general and humankind in particular as being highly evolved is 1) the opposable thumb and 2) the ability, in some cases, to walk erect.

To draw this out, if this company feels that the opposable thumb is an undesirable trait for the entry level employee, I couldn't help but wonder what traits would be done away with management? ultimately to become quadrapeds? ... administration were to become invertebrates? ... I could just see it now ... the CEO is a jellyfish.

Ha ha ha.

At least I'm getting a laugh out of this place.

***The Sacred Book of Coffee ***

By Loki W. Kaspari

Those of us who live and die by the coffee recognize this book for what it really is; a collection of funny stories which may seem vaguely blasphemous to those with no sense of humor whatsoever. We encourage such people not to read any further.

Many of the manuscripts in the Sacred Book of Coffee have been rescued from garbage bins or restored from fragments, while others have been deliberately suppressed and are only now coming to light. While each Coffee Cult assigns different meanings and levels of importance to each, all are agreed that the spirit of Coffee is in each of them, if you will but look for it.

Chapter 1: The Book of Awakening

The oldest of the Books of Coffee, the Awakening is said to have been written by a Heavy Construction Foreman as he sat in a dinner waiting for a call from the driver of a

cement truck. History is silent about how long he waited, how much coffee he drank, these were the days of the bottomless cup for fifty cents. Though we have evidence that the cement truck driver did arrive eventually, what passed between them is not recorded, which is probably just as well.

In the beginning there was nothing, and into this nothing woke The Lord Joe. And Joe was groggy and sore weary, for yea, The Management had been running him ragged. Twas His third universe in a Month and not one of them had been built under budget or on time. And The Lord did wax wrathful upon his Contracted Help who lo, were probably pinching stuff off the building site even now.

Then did Joe say unto himself, "I hope there is some Coffee still in my thermos." So saying, he did reach out unto his thermos, and lo it did come to him. And though there was but half a cup within and cold it was, Joe turned it not aside. For he was Joe, and if He couldn't summon forth Coffee, He sure as hell wasn't going to summon forth any waters.

"Let there be Coffee in great abundance," Sayeth the Lord. "And let it be brought forth hot, with sugar and cream." And even as He spake, Coffee did come forth, piping hot and sweetened unto the Lords liking. And lo, the Lord Joe did pour out His first cup, and have a sip. And it was good.

And Joe, having finished His first cup, did look down upon the building site, and lo He did see His Contracted Help milling about and yawning. And the righteous wrath of the Lord did soften to compassion and pity, for His Help was ignorant in the ways of Coffee, and so knew not of early mornings. And the Lord did resolve to bring Coffee unto His Contracted Help, and so ease their suffering.

"Let there be an engine for the making of Coffee, sort of thing." Sayeth the Lord, and lo though He did finish but lamely, such an engine there was. But full weary with much lack of sleep, the Contracted Help knew this engine not, but banged on it's side and asked only "Art thys thing working?" And the Lord spake unto his Contracted Help saying "Use ye but one filter, and add thee sugar and cream if needed."

And the Contracted Help did partake of this sacred Coffee of the Lord, and lo they grew wakeful and eager to face thee day. And the Lord Joe saw that it was good, and lo, he did bring forth doughnuts and pastries, and muffins and bagels also. Yea, even did he bring forth individual packets of cream-cheese.

And the Contracted Help rejoiced and spake praises unto the Lord Joe, with many cries of "Good Coffee!" and "The Lord Maketh A Tasty Bagel." And lo, empowered and awakened by the Coffee, and sustained by the tasty pastries, the Contracted Help did pay heed to the Lord's voice when he spake saying "Get Ye To Thy Work, Thou Lazy Buggers!"

And the Lord did let Coffee flow forth in great abundance, and lo, the work upon the universe was finished in seven days, as opposed to the union regulation ten, yea and even it was completed under budget. And the Contracted Help did rejoice at the bonus that the Lord bestowed upon them for early completion. And though they did pinch stuff from

the site like always, despite the Coffee of the Lord, He waxed nor wrathful against them, but rather forgave them, and stayed his hand of vengeance. For yea, the savings allowed the Lord to get replacements in on time, so gravity, and yea the inertia too, were working in a manner pleasing and within specifications.

There weren't enough neutrinos about the place, but the Lord figured he could come back when he had some extras in stock and sneak them in before they were missed.

And it was good.

Zephyr and Reginald: Minions For Hire

by Gynn Stella and Rick Silva



Review of *Brilliant Suspension* by Trina Shealy Orton

by John O'Brien

I've been putting this off for a while. I beg the author's forgiveness.

Let me begin by making a confession. The following is going to be a bit biased. I am rather fond of the author of *Brilliant Suspension*. She and her husband (of who I am also fond of) have made, through kindness and friendship, the past two or three years a bit more tolerable. For that I am very grateful.

Many times when I go to write a story, I find myself drowning in details. Literally. I don't care to admit how often I end up deleting a whole evening's work because I hate the color of a character's shirt or I'm frustrated that I'm not capturing a scene right or whatnot.

The point is, not much of that ultimately matters. I lose ideas, good ideas, that deserve to be explored, or at least a fighting chance to live. That is part of the reason I found reading this so rewarding.

This story reminded me that a good idea is worth pursuing. I know that much hard work went into making this story breathe. Not because I was there for any of it, but because throughout I saw many points where I would go off on tangents or switch moods, behavior ... slide a monkey wrench in. One such point is where the protagonist is recounting his last real memories before his ordeal began. I would have had to fight the urge to go into a ten page narrative to flesh the character out.

But honestly, that's not what the story is about. So where I would have been still writing about neon signs and stale cigarette smoke (and then reaching for the delete key), Ms. Shealy Orton made the correct but painful (as it is for most writers) decision to give us a paragraph or two about that fateful night and leave it at that. Cleansed. Cast off. Purified.

And THAT is so right for this story! *Brilliant Suspension* has many of the elements of a classic Poe tale, but doesn't let itself be a mere retread. It's something else; new. Fighting to transcend ...

Do yourself a favor. Get your wallet out and click here [<http://www.amazon.com/> and search for *Teddy Bear Cannibal Massacre* edited by Tim Lieder]. And then follow the voice down the alleyway.



Contributor Bios

Dangerous Lee is a syndicated columnist who writes "Ask Dangerous Lee".

Dangerous Lee is a sassy and sexy single mom from Michigan with an opinion about everything and a way with words that shocks and entertains.

<http://www.myspace.com/dangerouslee> :: askdangerouslee@hotmail.com

Adrian S. Potter won the 2003 Langston Hughes Poetry Contest and the 2005 Saturday Writers Short Story Contest. He has been published in more than 60 different literary journals, magazines, and websites. Adrian's first book, a poetic memoir called My Own Brand of Blues, is forthcoming through RockWay Press.

Misty O'Brien is a multi-disciplinary artist living in Central Minnesota with her husband of nearly two years. Among her many interests lie painting, wirework, jewelry making, desktop publishing, polymer clay, and crocheting. She was previously the publisher of *Stamper 62*, *honeybunches* (with John O'Brien), both zines under the Brave Girl Studio header, as well as publishing several chapbooks of prose and poetry by such writers as Leslie Powell, Rick Silva, Trina Shealy Orton, Catherynne M. Valente and Jen Trance. Besides this zine, she currently publishes a mini zine called *Yeah, but still...*, works on her art, runs Skyah&Bram Productions and Brave Girl Studio, and works part time as a retail slave. You can find Misty's art journal at www.skyahandbram.com/passiongroove and she can be contacted at misty@bravegirlstudio.net.

John O'Brien is a writer living in Central Minnesota with his wife of nearly two years. He has written several chapbooks of poetry in his life, with *boys + girls* being the most recent. He often contributes poetry to his wife Misty's projects, and contributes a lot of moral and emotional support. When he's not slaving away in the food service industry, his interests include horror movies, vampires, music, reading (particularly history texts), and D&D. He recently completed his first painting (in the private collection of his parents).

Rick Silva grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, attended Cornell University, and currently teaches chemistry at a high school on Cape Cod, where he resides with his wife and two cats. He has been involved in small press publishing since his college days. As a co-founder of Pentegram Komix & Graphix, Rick published and edited *Kinships* magazine, a speculative fiction literary magazine that ran six issues under Rick's editorship. Along with his wife Gynn, Rick is a partner in Dandelion Studios, a small press comic book company. Rick co-writes the Dandelion Studios comic *Zephyr & Reginald: Minions for Hire*, and he will also be writing scripts for several new Dandelion Studios projects scheduled for release in 2006. He writes a regular comic book review column for the comic fan site Comicwidows.com, and publishes his own zine, *Caravan*, on a somewhat irregular basis. Rick attends science fiction and gaming conventions around the northeastern states, and has been involved in the gaming scene for more than 20 years. Rick also writes and performs poetry. Prior to his recent move back to Massachusetts, Rick taught high school science in Jersey City, New Jersey, where he was a regular at several open mic events.

Gynn Stella is originally from New Hampshire. She received her degree from Massachusetts College of Art with a major in filmmaking. She currently lives and works on Cape Cod with her husband, Rick Silva. Together they make up Dandelion Studios, a small press comic book company. Gynn does all of the artwork for their comic *Zephyr & Reginald: Minions for Hire*. Her artwork has appeared in *Space & Time* magazine, and she was recently selected to be published in the 2005 *24-Hour Comics Day anthology*. In addition to doing her artwork, Gynn is involved in animal rescue, and has adopted two cats with special needs.

Editor's note: You can contact both Rick and Gynn through their website at www.dandelionstudios.com.

Ben Smith is a former law student who has opted for the glamorous and exciting world of alternative political cartooning. In June of 2006, *Fighting Words* will be featured in *Attitude 3: The Subversive New Media Cartoonists*, Ted Rall's third collection of up-and-comers in the world of alt-cartooning. Readers can check out all kinds of *Fighting Words* goodies, including the blog, the archive, and a new cartoon every Monday, at www.fightingwordscomics.com!

bri zine is a 20 year old student, poet, musician, and photographer. she has been making zines for over 5 years and currently publishes a perzine titled "motor city kitty", as well as works on the staff of "hello cleveland: this is scum and noise". she was featured as one of YM magazine's 20 coolest girls in america in november of 2003. she enjoys eating strawberry jello, blowing bubbles in manchester field at 2 AM, thrift shopping, checking her mailbox obsessively, sewing, and staring at her globe lamp for hours. she can be reached at motorcity_kitty@yahoo.com.

Vanessa Littlecrow Wojtanowicz is a self-trained multidisciplinary artist and businesswoman. Originally from Puerto Rico, she is the owner of the Rice Print Shop in Rice, Minnesota, and author of *Polska, Sucka!* and the *Nine Lives of Catnose*. Currently she lives in a dome in the middle of a forest with her husband and two cats.

Loki W. Kaspari is a writer and comic artist whose goal is to leave his honest job to write and draw full time, just like most other writers and artists. His other works includes *Ace and Bog*, a comic strip about a pair of working-class assassins.

Michael D. Vizard was born in Flint, MI in 1978, and practices law as a litigator of real estate issues. He currently lives in Fenton, MI.

One Neck Hates You is Edinburgh based cartoonist and illustrator Iain Laurie. Iain has contributed drawings and illustrations to a number of small press titles and magazines around the world. He currently spends his free time watching "Miami Vice" re-runs and solving crimes with a supernatural element.

Brianne Fidgety: It should come as no surprise that any claims Brianne Fidgety makes of being human have always been regarded as, to say the very least, doubtful. Even those who have met her in passing staunchly defend the fact that she is a strange creature indeed, and there is no way her amber, soul-stealing eyes are of this world. Rumour has it that she was forgotten in Western Pennsylvania by a tribe of drunken banshees. While there is no way to definitively verify this, it is true that she has an unusual aura about her. Miss Fidgety always seems to know when a terrible thunderstorm is approaching, even if it is a few days away. And curiously, as a young child, her granddad, who was an avid gardener during his stay on this particular planet, noticed that the flowers climbed out of their subterranean homes in order to be closer to her presence. Perhaps this is why the majority of her fuzzy first memories revolve around spending entire afternoons by his side in the backyard, the both of them coaxing and cajoling tomato plants, daffodils, and pansies forever skyward. Brianne Fidgety has put her assumed banshee blood to good use; she once fronted both a punk band and the collective gaggle of noise known as Spazbot. When not filling the oblivion that is Western Pennsylvania with her tempestuous screaming, she can be found writing until her early-onset arthritis forces her to stop then spitefully smirking and writing some more, crocheting, reading profuse amounts of Franz Kafka and Kurt Vonnegut, caring for her crimson-and-turquoise Beta named Lord Caligula of the Zombiefishes, learning how to speak Gaelic, antagonizing any form of human life with which she comes in contact, or at her local hospital zapping people with radiation. And one delightful day, she'll finally find where those boozing fey bastards left her wings.

James Dilworth [no bio submitted]

Random Thoughts: All random thoughts in this issue are attributed to either Misty or John O'Brien. If you have a random thought you'd like to see included, please email it to misty@bravegirlstudio.net.

Editor's note: If you want to contact one of the contributors and info isn't available, please send your message to misty@bravegirlstudio.net with "itak" and the contributor's name in the subject line. We'll make sure your message gets forwarded.

Submission info: If you would like to contribute to future issues of It Takes All Kinds, please send your poems, short stories, comics, random thoughts, articles and musings to misty@bravegirlstudio.net with either "ITAK" or "it takes all kinds" as the subject line. Issues are quarterly, and submissions are taken on a continual basis. You will be contacted by email if your submission is accepted. The zine is B&W, so all pictorial contributions must be in greyscale, and either jpeg or gif. Payment is a finished copy of the issue in which your contribution appears.